

## **Specialist Debt Advice Service**

**Ref: 21-16C**

### **Introduction**

The Money and Pensions Service, MaPS (the “Authority”) is an arm’s-length body, sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions, with a joint commitment to ensuring that people throughout the UK have guidance and access to the information they need to make effective financial decisions over their lifetime.

This Early Engagement Notice is to advise prospective providers of the Authority’s intention and is not a formal call for tender.

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) will be issuing a tender for the delivery of a high-quality service to offer Debt Advisers (working within the free to client sector) a quick and consistent response to unusual or complex debt queries. The service will be delivered remotely by both phone and email.

[MaPS will be holding a Supplier Engagement Session on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021.](#)

### **Description**

The service will support debt advisers with the provision of accurate debt advice to over-indebted clients, empowering advisers to achieve good client outcomes, and increasing adviser confidence by providing access to the most relevant technical and tailored advice.

The service should look to increase awareness of more complex legal information, lack of knowledge of certain procedures or pure complexity in application of the law.

It should be accessible to independent debt advice agencies, Local Citizens Advice, local authorities, housing associations, IMA members, commercial providers offering free to client advice and other voluntary sector agencies. The service will also be the main point of contact for debt adviser queries relating to ‘Breathing Space’ and liaise closely with the Insolvency Service regarding Debt Relief Order (DRO) queries. The insight gained from the service will be shared with MaPS which will assist with identifying acute training needs and future additional initiatives to support advisers.

Whilst the proposed contract may be awarded to a single organisation, MaPS may also consider consortia arrangements.

Whilst the service MaPS is procuring must be delivered within England there is currently a separate agreement in place with the current supplier and Welsh Government to allow access to the service for Welsh advisers.

MaPS plan to hold a [Specialist Debt Advice Service supplier engagement session](#) (via Microsoft Teams) on **26<sup>th</sup> March 2021**, details of which will be notified separately to prospective providers who indicate their interest to participate in the engagement session. This will provide an opportunity for prospective providers to find out more about the aims of the proposed service, the tendering process involved, as well as an opportunity to network with others. MaPS will use the opportunity to gather intelligence from providers which may influence development of the tender.

Any organisation wishing to bid should be aware of the eligibility criteria as outlined below:

Organisations that wish to deliver debt advice must hold the relevant FCA authorisation (to provide debt advice) unless they have a valid FCA-authorized exemption. However, organisations wishing to take part in the bidding process do not need to have received FCA authorisation to bid or to act as a consortium lead during the delivery of services but must ensure the delivery partners include providers who are FCA authorised and able to begin service delivery from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021.

MaPS expects the successful service provider to be in place to commence service operations by the start date of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021. This should be a consideration for any organisation participating for the tendering phase.

Prospective providers are advised that the FCA authorisation process can take up to 12 months. Visit the FCA website to find out more about application for authorisation and exemptions.

<https://www.fca.org.uk/>

### **Supplier Engagement Session**

**To attend the Specialist Debt Advice Service support session on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, interested organisations should email the MaPS commercial team referenced below by 5pm on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2021 with the Subject Heading '21-16C SDAS Engagement', and contact details (name and title) for attendees (a maximum of two attendees per organisation) to:**

**Commercial Manager – Carol Hilaire**

**E. [commercial@maps.org.uk](mailto:commercial@maps.org.uk)**

**The Authority reserves the right not to proceed with the Procurement or any part thereof or change the requirements as necessary at any time.**

**The ITT is expected to be published in April 2021 (may be subject to change). A Contract Notice will be issued.**

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### **About the Authority**

#### **Contact name**

Money and Pensions Service

**Address** 120 Holborn, London EC1N 2TD

#### **Email**

[commercial@maps.org.uk](mailto:commercial@maps.org.uk)

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**How to apply** - Please apply directly to the buyer using the contact details provided, or follow the instructions given in the notice description or information section.